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Subject: Responses to questionnaire

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As an avid USER, rather than mediator, my perspective may vary from that of the procurement echelons.

Questions are numbered from yours of 24 January

Issue A -- traditional method

1. I know almost every individual lab head is getting on the web. The RU has its own home page and is mounting more and more academically pertinent information on it.

2. Who knows what will succeed the WWW. But it will be something like. Look at how internet competitors are throwing in the towel. The WWW was invented for physics. It is the vehicle for a great deal of less formal communication among other scientists. There are dozens of experiments in train on at least co-publishing in that medium. It may take as long as 10 years before it has substantially supplanted the specialty print journal.

I imagine the interdisciplinary journals of wide distribution (Science, Nature ...) are here to stay for contemporary browsing, with online followon.

3. The Web will be competing with CD-ROM for distribution of databases; they will coexist for a while. But if the mega-comm companies go ahead with movies on demand, online shopping etc., and enhance the bandwidth/price ratio, I imagine the Web will win out.

I will shortly be receiving beta-test version of Medline/WWW. Don Lindberg promises a lot of techoical, but not of course citations.

4. Web browsers have built in search capability; but there will be greater need than ever for navigational tools. You'll have to track UMLS closely.

7. I think librarians will be teaching more and more students and faculty how to use the tools themselves. The more interactive systems really need the bench persons to be fully exploited. But they'll need a lot of support in learning how to navigate. The youngsters will win the day: I had email from a 9-year old in Wichita Falls, Texas, who looked up my address on the RU home page!

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Issue B. Changes in the value chain.

1. Most -- bullets not much changed in last year.

Funding is ever tighter, and we worry even more. NIH did finally get its budget. Pressures on university overhead are more stringent than ever, and central admins. are shedding more and more (as they can) to individual labs and their local support.

Publishing in electronic journals is not yet canonical in most journals. We need to crack the 'dignity' barrier. The APS is leading the way. Interest groups, more closed in (and almost invisible colleges) are proliferating.

2. Primary publishers. Are finally catching on. Charles Ellis (Wiley) told me they're seeing no alternative but to meet web headon.

We still need to organize peer review (for dignity, v.s.)

Searching Publisher's sites will work as well as anything; if I know what journal I'm looking for. I'll want an intelligent agent if I have a bibliography.

Biochemists and Microbiologists are quite far along in webwise, CDwise versions of their journals. I don't know about backlogs.

3. Secondary.

Obviously you need both content and software. I think ISI is in pretty good shape (always incremental exceptions) in content. We can always use smarter interfaces to the search engines; error-recovery. As of last year, about 1% of records had some significant error in a search term: I hate to think of losing access to those for that reason. Authors make lots of mistakes in their bibliographies!

Getting access to full document delivery online. is the next major challenge.

ISI should provide the best navigational tools, and helps to authors in maintaining and retrieving from their local downloaded datasets: full documentwise!!

Issue C.

2. Medline may be a major threat. They offer immense cost saving to user; of course more limited search capability. Many users will be happy with just medline nevertheless.

3. New competitors. Every existing publisher must be thinking about. And online service providers.

5. Where put resources. We'll have a lot of conversation

I'd put a Web platform for Citation Index/Abstracts at top of list. Current Awareness will be a subset of that (I'll just run my own profile)

Next image (or text) based document delivery.

New Value: intelligent agents. Semantic nets. Semantic translation of causal and other (verb) relationships in texts. E.G. I'm hunting unsuccessfully for 'ethyl-guanine" as a mutagen. There is immense noise, because ethyl-guanine often appears as a modified base in DNA upon treatment of cells with alkylating agents.

Standards: why invest much in that. It's easy enough to mechanically translate from one to another format.

Issue D.
Public Image.

No change noted. My own experience with customer relations is excellent. More and more of my friends are familiar with ISI products.

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